



## **Executive Officer's Statement**

**February 22, 2007**

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### **District Attorneys Association Conference**

Last month I attended the California District Attorneys Association (CDAA) Winter Conference with Laura Hill, Deputy over the Victim Compensation Program. We presented information on VCGCB activities and initiatives and details on several new laws effective this year that enhance benefits to victims of violent crime in California. We also provided information on the Victim Compensation Program to newly elected district attorneys. Our attendance at the conference reinforces the strong working relationship between the VCGCB and CDAA, and also highlights the interest we share in assisting victims of violent crime.

### **Symposium Looks to Next "Wave" in Victims' Rights**

As the victims' rights movement celebrates the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the California Victims' Bill of Rights this year, it is looking to the future with a "Symposium on Crime Victims' Rights – The Third Wave," which takes place at the University of the Pacific McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento in March. Joining VCGCB in co-hosting the symposium are the Office of the Governor, Crime Victim Advocate; the Capital Center for Government Law and Policy; the UOP McGeorge School of Law; the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation; and the California District Attorneys Association. The symposium will be a forum for discussion of future developments in the victims' rights movement.

### **VCGCB to Host Western Regional NACVCB Conference**

The Board will host the Western Regional Conference of the National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards in San Diego April 10-13. Representatives from 15 Western state compensation programs are expected to gather to discuss issues of mutual concern, such as enhancing claims processing, public outreach, funding, responding to mass-casualty events, elder abuse, family justice centers, and innovative approaches to care for crime victims.

### **Bus Shelter Outreach Project in Los Angeles Scheduled to Debut**

On March 19, the bus shelter outreach pilot project is scheduled to begin. The project will place the VCGCB poster in 60 bus shelters for eight weeks in several Los Angeles County high-crime areas. The goal of this outreach project is to evaluate the effectiveness of using public service announcement posters to reach Californians who may be in need of victim compensation or assistance, but who are not aware these services are available. The posters feature the VCGCB's website address and the toll-free phone number for the Los Angeles District Attorney Victim Witness Assistance Program, which will assist in tracking public response.

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**Victim Witness Coordinating Council Compensation Committee Focuses on CaRES**

Members of the Victim Witness Coordinating Council Compensation Committee had a chance to experience the VCGCB's new facilities and the new CaRES (Compensation and Restitution System) claims processing system at their February 6 meeting here at the Board's new headquarters. Representatives from Joint Powers partners and Victim Witness Assistance Centers from throughout the state attended the meeting, along with VCGCB Executive Staff and key program staff members.

In the morning session, Committee members met in the VCGCB's new hearing room, where they received a presentation on the CaRES system and had an opportunity to ask questions about how the system would work for them. The new laws that expand victim benefits were also discussed.

In the afternoon session, participants attended a CaRES demonstration in the VCGCB's training room. Local victim witness and Joint Powers staff had the opportunity to discuss the CaRES process in detail and were impressed with CaRES' features.

Development of CaRES is steadily progressing toward statewide rollout. A key development was the recent selection of two Joint Powers county offices – Sacramento and San Joaquin – as participants in a pilot project to further expand, develop and test the system. The pilot project is scheduled to begin in mid-March and will help ensure CaRES meets the needs of our local partners and operates smoothly at their offices. The feedback from these local partners is an essential step toward a successful statewide rollout.

**Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding**

The federal fiscal-year 2008 budget request released earlier this month proposes to "cancel" the balance of the Crime Victims Fund. VOCA funding provides essential support for the VCGCB's victim compensation program and similar programs throughout the country. The reserve balance was targeted for reduction in the prior two years, however, this year's budget request seeks to remove the current balance of the fund, to leave a projected balance of \$0, and then to use general tax dollars to fund a \$625 million VOCA cap, with \$50 million of this designated for emergency reserve. There is concern that this proposal would eliminate a secure funding source for the Crime Victims Fund.